United Nations A/73/482

General Assembly

Distr.: General
5 November 2018

Original: English

**Seventy-third session**
Agenda item 54
**United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East**

## Letter dated 31 October 2018 from the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

This year, the United States could not join consensus on the report of the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/73/349) and disassociated from the text.

The United States believes that the report is inadequate in addressing the sources of the financial problems of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and that the report uses language that is regrettably politicized and biased. In an effort to balance the report, the United States proposed language to condemn Hamas, which is a primary cause of Palestinian suffering in Gaza. Our proposed edits reflected the reality of the situation on the ground, including Hamas purposefully using UNRWA facilities as cover for its underground tunnel network and the cynical decision by Hamas to use its finite resources on its militant activities at the expense of the Palestinian people. Inclusion of this language should not have been controversial. Without language addressing Hamas, a root cause of the humanitarian and economic situation affecting Palestinians — including UNRWA beneficiaries — in Gaza, the report was wholly unbalanced.

On 31 August, the Administration determined that it would not make further contributions to UNRWA. As the United States made clear, beyond the budget gap itself and the failure to mobilize adequate and appropriate burden-sharing, the fundamental business model and fiscal practices that have marked UNRWA for years — tied to its endlessly and exponentially expanding community of entitled beneficiaries — is simply unsustainable. The United States has already started to intensify dialogue with the United Nations, host Governments and international stakeholders about new models and new approaches, which may include direct bilateral assistance from the United States and other partners, that can provide today's Palestinian children with a more durable and dependable path towards a brighter tomorrow.

18-18613 (E) 071118

Please recycle

We hope that in the future, the Working Group will be able to adopt a report that addresses the true political realities on the ground and that looks for innovative ways to address the structural issues in the UNRWA model.

We kindly request that the present letter be issued as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 54.

(*Signed*) Jonathan R. **Cohen**
Ambassador